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AIRGRAM

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Airgram A-218

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BUREAU SERIES A

TO : Department of State

DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS TO:

PANAMA FIR- USCINCSO FOR POLAD

American Embassies MANAGUA, TEGUCIGALPA, SAN JOSE,
and SAN SALVADOR

FROM : AmEmbassy, GUATEMALA

DATE: October 29, 1965

SUBJECT: Internal Security: Periodic Guerrilla Report

REF : A-63, August 7, 1965

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/HR

REVIEWED BY *Eng* DATE *Oct 1965*
PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATED

SUMMARY:

Guerrilla activity in the period since the last summary guerrilla report (A-143, September 15) has received little news publicity other than for Rightist plots, although guerrillas were recently fairly active. Non-publicized activity included the capture of 14 individuals who infiltrated the Zacapa Army Base and the sabotage of a United Fruit Company's packing plant in Bananera. There are added indications that as general elections (next March) approach, more extremist activity can be anticipated despite increased Army effectiveness (in the form of its recently-established mobile military police).

The Embassy is attaching herewith a compilation of terrorist acts and counter-guerrilla operations noted by the Office of the Army Attaché for the period September 20-October 20, the period covered by this report.

Publicized Activity

Rightist plots dominated the published news over the past few weeks, as exiled Guatemalan politician Roberto Alejos was reported up to his usual tricks in his efforts to unseat the present Guatemalan Government. Finally, the GOG issued a warrant for his arrest.

The GOG irritation with Alejos would appear justified, as a number of Guatemalan exiles in El Salvador, allegedly with Alejos support, were caught by the

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Salvadoran police in the midst of still another plot (Embtel 201).

On the Leftist side of the political spectrum, published news was scant. The University student organization (AEU-Asociación Estudiantil Universitaria) organized a demonstration on the anniversary of the October 20, 1944 Revolution, but it could hardly be deemed a success as university students stayed away in droves. However, the AEU succeeded in organizing a strike at the university over the basic studies program and at the moment students in the Faculties of Law, Economics, and Humanities have joined the students of the Basic Studies program who are not attending classes. The AEU also held its annual elections and an extremist student leader, Mario Botzoc, won, although he has not yet taken office as a result of a complaint lodged against his candidacy by opposition groups (primarily the Social Christian FESC).

Elsewhere, it was reported (Weeka 41) that two soldiers were killed in an encounter with guerrillas (the former were patrolling the Atlantic Highway). A small cache of arms was found (grenades and home-made bombs) and several students were arrested for complicity in terrorist acts. Finally, an attack occurred on October 20 in Guatemala City on Fernando Ibargüen, a leading and very wealthy Guatemalan businessman. He was seriously wounded, and the assailants escaped. So far, no real motive has been discovered (although Ibargüen allegedly refused to contribute financially to the extremist cause).

Rumors and Reports of Other Activities:

The press did not publicize two particularly important events which have occurred recently in Guatemala. The first had to do with the United Fruit Company, and the Embassy learned of the event directly from United Fruit Company employees (Embtel 229). According to the latter, saboteurs destroyed one of United Fruit Company's packing plants on its plantation in the Bananera area, causing some \$60,000 worth of damage.

What is particularly disconcerting about this attack is that UFCO employees.

_____ have reiterated several times to the Embassy that UFCO is approaching the point of withdrawal from Guatemala. _____ UFCO's directors in New Orleans have given _____ discretion to make a decision along this line if terrorist acts and financial losses make continued operation unfeasible. Since the Guatemalan operation is not particularly an important one for UFCO, and is not that profitable, the decision presumably would not be too hard to reach.

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Should UFCO decide to pull out of Guatemala, fairly serious consequences could be expected. The Bananera area already suffers from unemployment, and UFCO provides one of the few locally bright economic lights. Its withdrawal would add to the unemployment problem, would feed fuel to the anti-American propaganda of the guerrillas who operate in the region, and could cause problems for the International Nickel Company's plans for investment in the area (A-143). While presumably it would not stop the mining development, it could encourage the guerrillas to try the same tactics against the Nickel Company, thereby disrupting the orderly development of the area.

The other unpublicized story concerns Communist infiltration at the military base in Zacapa. any publicity, the event naturally assumed all sorts of distortions. it is difficult to tell exactly what did happen. The most extreme story has it that a coup was attempted on the base during the visit of Chief of Government Enrique Peralta (who had to flee for safety), and that after the "rebellion" was quelled, captured prisoners recounted under torture that some twenty bands of guerrillas, representing a now unified 13 of November Movement (MR-13) and Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes (FAR) were massing to attack the base on or about October 30.

However, [redacted] presents a more likely picture of infiltration of the base by 14 civilians linked with the MR-13, and not the FAR. These have all been arrested and interrogation has revealed that according to these prisoners there are two bands of 20 men each operating in the general area, and one band of 30. The infiltrators had been keeping the guerrillas informed of Army patrols and other counter-guerrilla activity.

Partially corroborating this story was the information received by the Embassy that in the last several weeks the Army suffered several set-backs in its counter-guerrilla operations. In four separate instances, troops were allegedly ambushed, and on one occasion, nine soldiers were supposedly killed. In only one instance did the Army emerge victorious, killing six guerrillas, and on that occasion, the story goes, the officer in charge of the patrol became frightened and dumped some of the bodies in a river and buried the rest. In any event, guerrillas seemed to be receiving inside information on Army activities, and hopefully this sweep of the Zacapa base will bring at least a temporary stop to this guerrilla advantage.

Other Army Developments:

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Previously reported only in the Army Attaché's IR, and incidentally in the Embassy's A-217, the activity of the Army's new mobile

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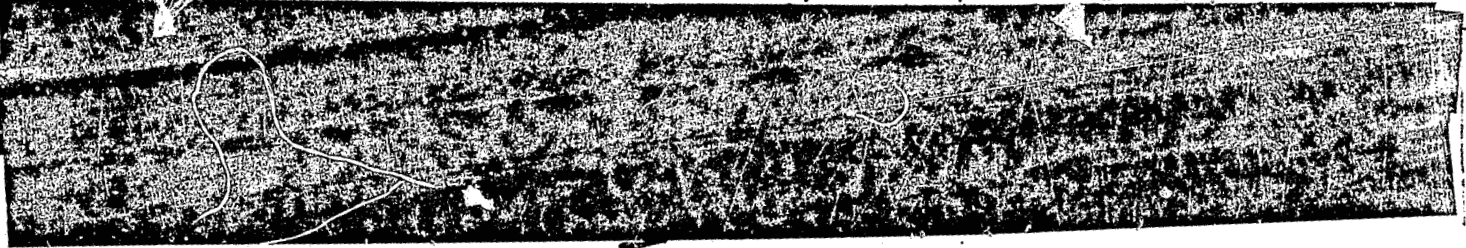
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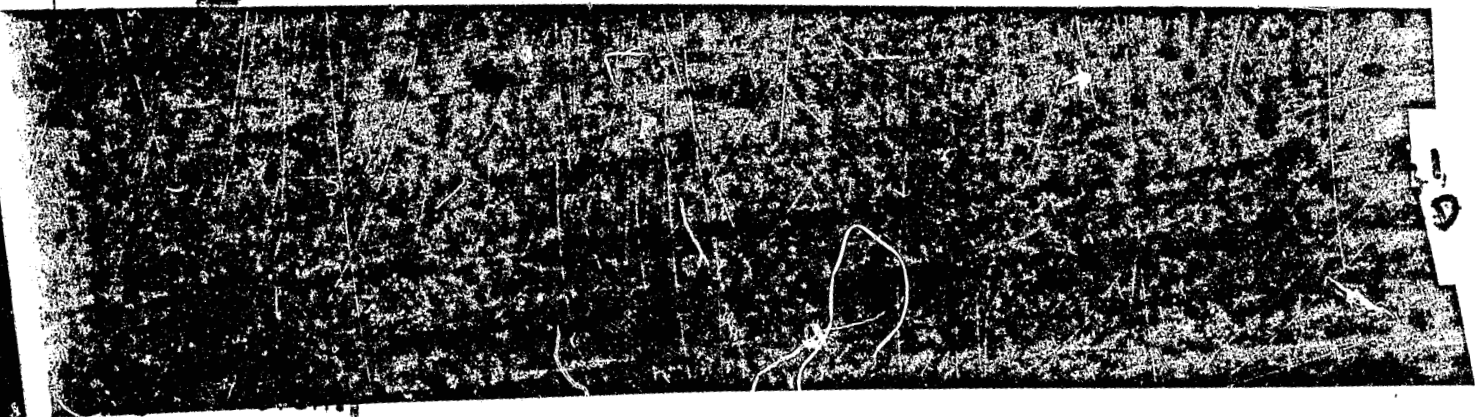
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military police (MMP) force should be noted. This was created at the beginning of 1965, and although this event received some minor publicity, since that time the Army has kept the group "under wraps"



As mentioned in A-217, the military police unit appears to be an effective, relatively well-trained, mobile force devoting most of its energies to counter-guerrilla activity and to catching smugglers on Guatemala's borders. Its functions cut across other police lines, for it deals with common criminals also (a national police function), with smugglers (Hacienda police), guerrillas, (Judicial police and regular Army), and highway patrol (traffic police). As a result, it appears to have aroused at least a little animosity and envy on the part of those affected by the competition.

The Force is made up of Army volunteers who apparently receive hazardous duty pay. Its members travel all over the country in response to specific actions, and give more the appearance of pistoleros when in the field than of military police. They travel in small groups and any prisoners they capture enter the military judicial system rather than the civilian, with the result that the captured party's civil liberties need not be observed. Its ability to act entirely independently of the civilian system stems from the fact it is directly responsible to the Minister of Defense (currently the Chief of Government), with no intermediate authority or civilian arm of the Government appearing in the chain of command.



Communist Strategy:

Conflicting reports continue to be heard on specific Communist strategy for the immediate future. What does appear possible is

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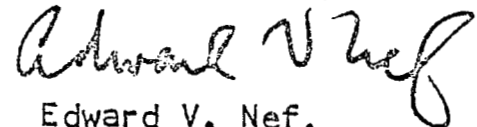
that the Communists intend to increase the tempo of their activities as general elections approach, with the hope that the elections will be postponed or that the Army will prevent a civilian regime from taking power. It is surely one of the Communist objectives to create chaotic conditions which will only assist the Communist cause. Should the Communist Party and the MR-13 settle their differences and work towards a unified goal, the potential for trouble-making would certainly increase, and stepped-up terrorist activities could be anticipated.

COMMENT:

While the Zacapa incident has aroused the most interest it should not cause undue surprise. Infiltration of GOG forces has already been reported (see refairgram), and this is an instance where GOG forces found out about it and caught the suspects. It remains, of course, a serious matter and cause for concern, for it reflects the underground power of the extremist forces. Whether it reflects an increase in that power is the key question: it certainly reflects an increase in power of the extremist forces as compared to several years ago, but on the other hand, in the more immediate sense it is another instance of the see-saw battle between the security forces and the extremists. While the guerrillas scored a coup by infiltrating the unit, the Army scored a coup by finding out about it and eliminating it (at least in this particular unit).

However, this longer-range increase in effectiveness of the guerrillas, tied with the possible withdrawal of the UFCO, even when balanced by the emergence of a new and effective Military Police Force, does not add up to a particularly attractive total. Possible increases in political instability, increased extremist activity, and continual blindness on the part of so much of the "upper sector" of society in Guatemala to the real threat presented by its indifference to the plight of the "lower sector", could well spell trouble for Guatemala in the months immediately preceding and following the forthcoming general elections.

For the Ambassador:



Edward V. Nef,
Second Secretary of Embassy

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Enclosure 1
Terrorist Acts and Counter-Guerrilla Operations
(Compiled by the Office of the Army Attaché)

<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>	
23 Sep	Zacapa	Military Brigade initiated a scouting expedition along the ridges of the Las Minas mountains between Teculután and Río Hondo.
25 Sep	Zacapa	Expedition of the military brigade between Teculután and Río Hondo without occurrence. Captured as a rebel suspect was an individual who stated his name was Roberto Agapito Aldana Valenzuela.
26 Sep	Vega Grande	Military commissioners' patrol captured 5 rebels in the village of Vega Grande, municipality Los Amates, Izabal, after an exchange of submachinegun crossfire. Thompson 45 submachinegun with three cartridge clips was captured.
26 Sep	Guatemala City	A blind shell of a 3.5 caliber bazooka fired some time ago, already totally oxidized and in bad state, was picked up by the National Police on 16th Avenida, Zone 1, in front of the house at 10-27. Two individuals, on motorcycle, that fled swiftly, threw it on the sidewalk, wrapped in newspaper, probably to get rid of it; the shell contains the following lettering "Rocket 36 In M-29 A-2."
27 Sep	Gran Canon	Rebels fired at the security service of the military detachment of Gran Canon, Izabal. There were no casualties.
8 Oct	El Rosario	Unknown assailants machine gunned jeep carrying two government soldiers; both were killed.
13 Oct	Seminola	Government Army patrols from Puerto Barrios conduct intensive patrols in area; results negative.
19 Oct	Las Vegas	Up to eleven patrols conducted by military. Three suspects captured.
19 Oct	Seminola	Clash between Guerrillas and Army patrol; two Army soldiers wounded. Rumor has it that six guerrillas were killed.
22 Oct	Zacapa	Arrest made at brigade; 11 especialistas arrested and 5 civilian PGT members in Zacapa.

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